

DRIED BLOOD SPOT (DBS) TESTING WORKING GROUP

Terms of Reference

The WADA Dried Blood Spot (DBS) Testing Working Group [DBS Testing WG] is a specific Working Group¹ created by the WADA Testing Department.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) are approved by the WADA Director General, following consultation with the WADA Director, Testing.

Background

Since the development of the first version of the Technical Document on DBS for Doping Control (TD2021DBS), which came into effect on 1 September 2021, more than 30 Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs) have collected over 8,000 DBS samples which to date in mid-2024 has resulted in 14 Adverse Analytical Findings (AAFs). There are currently 11 laboratories that have DBS analysis in their scope of accreditation with additional laboratories in the pipeline.

Purpose

To assist and promote further development and implementation of the DBS testing project globally for ADOs by creating guidelines on testing strategies considering the existing DBS laboratory analytical capacity. The DBS Testing WG will assist in educating ADOs in understanding the benefits of incorporating DBS samples as part of their testing program, such as informing ADOs about DBS sample collection equipment, testing strategies and sample transportation conditions.

The DBS Testing WG will also provide input on the strategic development of the DBS project including suggestions as to which prohibited substances and methods should be explored further from a scientific research perspective based on feedback from ADOs. Finally, the DBS Testing WG will liaise directly with the [DBS Technical Working Group](#), which was created in January 2024 to be responsible for the harmonized implementation of DBS analysis in WADA-accredited Laboratories.

The DBS Testing WG¹ was established in mid-2024 and forecast to carry out its mandate over a two-year period (i.e. until mid-2026). It will deliver recommendations to WADA on an ongoing basis during this period. The necessary meeting timelines will be framed with this in mind.

The work of this WG will be evaluated prior to mid-2026 to determine whether it shall continue and if so in what format.

¹ WGs are created on an as-needed basis only, and generally with a defined mandate requiring deliverables within a set timeframe. Where the expected deliverables are not met, an extension of mandate is possible, however it is not expected that WGs continue indefinitely. If it is considered that their work should be ongoing in nature, whether WG should be elevated to an Expert Advisory Group would need to be determined.

Objectives/Key Activities

The tasks of the DBS Testing WG may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Provide guidelines for test distribution planning, testing selections and analysis menus to ADOs based on existing DBS laboratory analytical capacity;
- 2) Prepare resources that will provide guidance to ADOs on DBS testing strategies;
- 3) Provide assistance to the DBS Technical WG on sample collection equipment, DBS testing implementation and other relevant matters, and obtain athlete, ADO and Doping Control Officer feedback;
- 4) Understand and identify the need for any rule changes/updates as a result of DBS testing implementation in sample collection and transportation;
- 5) Provide WADA Management with advice as to recommendations for ADAMS changes and improvements related to DBS collection;
- 6) Be aware of new research on DBS, applications of DBS and related equipment in fields outside of anti-doping that may help to inform further applications of DBS as a sample type;
- 7) Identify testing and analytical gaps and where applicable propose these as areas for further research by making recommendations to WADA Management and the DBS Technical WG; and
- 8) Work with WADA Management on a long-term strategy of the adoption and use of DBS as a sample type during sample collection.

Membership/Composition

The WADA Director General, following consultation with the Testing Department will appoint members to the DBS Testing WG.

Members are selected from (but not exclusively) the WADA Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group (STEAG) based on their relevant background and experience (e.g., expertise in DBS testing, previous participation in relevant WGs, etc.). At least one DBS Testing WG member shall also be a member of the DBS Technical WG to ensure effective cross-group communication and collaboration.

The composition of the DBS Testing WG shall not exceed a maximum of six to eight members, however an exception may be applied if deemed necessary.

The members are appointed for the duration of the mandate of the WG. Should a DBS Testing WG member be unable to contribute as expected, a replacement member may be appointed. If the work of the DBS Testing WG is not completed within the originally planned timeframe, and is extended, the composition and terms of members are reviewed to ensure their relevance remains.

The DBS Testing WG and its members are published on the WADA website.

If required, additional experts may be called upon on an ad-hoc basis for their contributions.

Chair/Rapporteur

A member from the WADA Strategic Management Office with experience on the DBS strategic project will chair the WG.

The DBS Testing WG reports to WADA's Testing Department and the Office of the Director General. The DBS Testing WG will provide regular updates to the STEAG.

Meetings and Working Norms

The DBS Testing WG will meet virtually via video or teleconference as many times as is necessary to complete its mandate. Should budget allow, and if deemed necessary, the WG may meet in person.

The DBS Testing WG normally operates on the basis of consensus and maintains as informal a manner as is possible or appropriate for the conduct of business.

Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Media

Upon their appointment and again annually, all DBS Testing WG members are required to sign a document, pursuant to which they undertake (i) to comply with the Code of Ethics adopted by the WADA Foundation Board (as amended from time to time); (ii) to comply with the Conflict of Interest policy adopted by the Foundation Board (as amended from time to time); (iii) to keep all matters related to WADA confidential; and (iv) to comply with the WADA Media Relations Policy issued by the Agency (as amended from time to time).

A) Code of Ethics

The purpose of the WADA Code of Ethics is to establish clear ethical standards over the activities of WADA Officials (as defined in Section 2 of the Code of Ethics) to allow WADA to achieve its mission and protect its core values. WADA and all its Officials undertake to foster a culture of ethics, loyalty, and integrity within their respective areas of competence.

B) Conflict of Interest

DBS Testing WG members will be bound by the WADA Conflict of Interest policy. They will be required to annually complete and sign a Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest in accordance with the policy, and to update such statement if and as necessary during the year.

C) Confidentiality

All DBS Testing WG members are required to sign a Confidentiality Declaration upon appointment, and again annually. This ensures all members reflect on the confidential nature of their WADA work and confirm their adherence to such confidentiality rules. All meetings and the work of the DBS Testing WG are confidential. No documents, information, discussions and determinations made at a WG meeting or otherwise exchanged or agreed in connection with the work of the WG shall be disclosed to any third party.

D) Communications and Media

All DBS Testing WG members must read and comply with WADA's Media Relations policy. If a Member should receive a request for an interview in relation to their role in WADA, or WADA's work in the fight against doping in sport, they should first consult with the WADA Head of Media Relations or (if absent), with the WADA Communications Director.

Administrative and Financial Support

The WADA Testing Department shall provide the necessary administration and operational resources for the DBS Testing WG meetings. WADA has allocated a preliminary budget for the duration of the DBS Testing WG. Should an extension of the mandate be required beyond mid-2026, additional budget will need to be approved prior to final confirmation of the DBS Testing WG continuing.

WADA will cover certain expenses and compensate DBS Testing WG members for meetings in accordance with its applicable indemnity policy.

It is acknowledged that some experts go above and beyond, including providing extensive advice throughout the year, outside of annual meetings. WADA offers a further indemnity to experts for such work carried out. The specific indemnity details are outlined in the "Overview of WADA Working Groups" document provided to Members each year.

WADA provides on an annual basis "General Information and Guidelines" to all its WG members. This document provides an overview of administrative policies and procedures applicable to the WG.

Effective Date

The mandate of the DBS Testing WG will formally commence on 1 July 2024 and these ToR will therefore come into effect on such date.

These ToR are published on the WADA website.